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IAC-D-57/7
16 August 1955

POST MORTEM ON NIE 11-3-55: SOVIET CAPABILITIES
AND PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION
THROUGH 1960

1. NIE 11-3-55, the annual estimate of trends in the development of Soviet power and policy, was approved by the IAC on 17 May 1955. Coordination proceeded relatively smoothly without major delays or serious disagreement, and the estimate was produced on schedule. The principal dissents occurred on questions of judgment -- the degree of independence enjoyed by Communist China in matters of major policy, the degree of likelihood that the USSR would withdraw from East Germany, and the likelihood of open intervention by the USSR in hostilities between the US and Communist China which threatened the existence of the latter.

2. As in the past, most of the difficulties encountered in the preparation and coordination of NIE 11-3-55 were the result of long-standing deficiencies of data on the Soviet area, deficiencies which, barring a break-through in collection and analytical techniques, are unlikely to be corrected at any early date. This post mortem does not attempt to catalogue these standard gaps again.^{1/} Instead, it explores some of the basic problems of analysis that were encountered in the preparation of the estimate.

I. FINDINGS

3. General. The general limitations of intelligence on the USSR were clearly evident in the process of attempting to measure the forces shaping Soviet policy. Intelligence was able to illuminate the broad outlines of the chief problems confronting the Soviet leadership, but it was unable to reveal the degree to which these problems, either separately or collectively, generated pressures on Soviet policy. How, for example, would the continuation of group rule affect Soviet decision-making? How heavy were the various claims on Soviet economic resources?

^{1/} Such a list is contained in IAC-D-57/2, Post Mortem on NIE Production 1 January - 30 June 1954, which was noted by the IAC on 16 November 1954.

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